

To - Governments of Canada and Alberta

From - Kee Wee Tin Nok Association, Wabasca, Alberta

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JUN 26 1968

Gentlemen,

In recent years we have called on you to assist us with problems in the area. In 1966, Premier Manning kindly outlined ten points on which we could expect co-operation. Some of these conditions have been met.

To-day we face another problem. Many of the officials asked to put the ten points into action found the agreement different than the way they usually work. To us it looks like they try to gain from our fumbles as we accept responsibility. In recent weeks as we started to work on our own problems we find much kindness offered where we do not need it. On the other hand important requests seem to get lost in a confusion of government men.

We appreciate this chance to talk with you. But why do men on expense accounts make us, with less than accepted income for reasonable living, go to so much expense to meet our officials.

When officials come to Wabasca they arrive without us knowing. They talk with certain people and leave. Those of us who worked hard to start an organization, like you asked, feel forgotten.

Nobody helped us with learning how to run meetings and things like that. It is hard for us. Yet meetings are called with a few hours notice and we are expected to be ready.

Now we do not want to sound cross. Here is what we have done since Mr. Manning made the agreement.

(1.) We had many meetings. We organized Kee Wee Tin Nok Association and got a government charter. It is for Treaty and non-Treaty people in the Desmarais-Wabasca area. Over half of our General Council are Treaty people.

The charter says we are able:

- To acquire lands, by purchase or otherwise, and erect or otherwise provide a building or buildings for social and community purposes;
- To promote and afford opportunity for friendly and social activities;
- To provide for the recreation of the members;
- To promote consideration and discussion of questions affecting the interests of the community;
- To encourage the practice of public speaking among its members;
- To encourage presentations on social, educational, political, economic and other subjects;
- To encourage musical and dramatic participation and entertainments;

See Mrs. Peggy Robbins letters of May 16 & June 23, 1968.

POLAR  
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484





- To establish and maintain a library and reading room;
- To encourage the development of horticultural, agricultural and forestry projects;
- To provide the necessary equipment and furniture for carrying on its various projects;
- To generally encourage and develop among its members a recognition of the importance of the individual, the family, the neighborhood, and the community in the national life;
- To sell, manage, lease, mortgage, dispose of or otherwise deal with the property of the society.

Members of the General Council (or board of directors)

Jack Auger - President

Clara Yellowknee - Secretary

Francis Cminayak - Treasurer

Oliver Yellowknee - Chairman of the Council and Communications Committee

David Starr - Chairman of Program Committee

Sam Auger - Chairman of Facilities Committee

Alphonse Alook - Chairman of Protection Committee

Chief Sammy Young - ex-officio member

Yosette Auger

John Alook.

To manage the Development Center and other projects we made the following organization of ~~xxx~~ responsibilities:

..... see next page



# Kee Wee Tin Nok Association

## GENERAL COUNCIL

### Responsible for:

Clarification of goals, making policies, setting prices, employment of staff, co-ordination<sup>of all</sup> effort and reporting at least quarterly to the membership.

### Program Committee

#### Responsible for:

- getting the job done on time;
- planning programs;
- conducting meetings;
- evaluating meetings;
- arranging delegations when appropriate;
- reporting to the GENERAL COUNCIL each month.

### Facilities Committee

- having rooms and equipment in good shape;
- arranging chairs;
- controlling temperature and lighting;
- having supplies ready such as paper, pencils, blackboards, chalk, erasers, towels, toilet paper, projector and films;
- arranging finances;
- having someone to collect fees;
- reporting each month to the

### GENERAL COUNCIL.

### MEMBERSHIP

- to attend the quarterly meetings, to hear reports and to create, adapt or maintain policies;
- to participate on one of the committees;
- to encourage the best use of facilities and program for the individuals and the total community in the Desmarais-Wabasca area.

### Protection Committee

- correspondence;
- recording minutes;
- distributing reports;
- preparing news releases;
- advertising;
- introductions;
- transportation plans;
- library;
- reporting each month to the GENERAL COUNCIL.
- fire protection;
- policing;
- insurance;
- licences;
- bonding;
- auditing;
- taking inventory at least annually and at the conclusion of special events;
- reporting each month to the GENERAL COUNCIL.





- 11 -

(2.) We asked for the use of the former St. John's Residential School which has been sitting equipped and heated but idle for nearly two years. Northland School Board very kindly returned their claim on it to Indian Affairs who let us use it now. It caused us some troubles but we have now passed a motion to be responsible for managing the building until June when the present contracts end and we would like to continue using it next year and many more years. We may need financial help for a year or two. Like, Northland is looking after heat, water and sewage until the end of June.

(3.) Since we got the use of the school at the end of January we have:

(a) run a three week course on driver training. Seven people got licenses, six failed the eye test when the Department of Highways sent an examiner to Wabasca.

(b) six people took a course with the Forestry men on log scaling.

(c) started a short course to develop licensed guides for tourists.

(d) run a weekly show with about sixty people coming each time.

(e) had many meetings. Sometimes three in one night.

(f) started monthly Rummage sales. The one last week made \$58.00 for community work.

(g) had forty-one people from native communities in Alberta and the Northwest Territories attend most or all of a five day course on leadership training and co-operative education.


(h) set up a " Welfare Committee ". This has ended many hard feelings about welfare officials and saved the government some money.

(i) helped the Sa Ponce Ken Co-operative get their bus out of the garage where it had been for six months.

(j) set up our committees and the General Council to manage the Development Center and other projects.

This we had to do with no money in the bank and only promises from some government men. But the Manager of the Royal Bank at Slave Lake understood us and helped. We hope the provincial short course money expected two months ago gets there soon.

(4) We have started plans for a transportation conference the first of the week of June. We wanted it sooner but too many will be out trapping. Everything we go to do gets in trouble with no transportation. Our homes are scattered over about thirty miles, which is good for our way of life but makes it hard to have your meetings. Some of us have old cars but can not drive them often. Many people have to walk or stay home. On top of that the new hospital at Slave Lake makes it harder for us to have sick people flown out to Edmonton. But we have no bus to take them to Slave Lake. People do not wait to get sick only when the mail man goes to Slave Lake twice a week. And anyway the road is so bad at times the mailman and the grocery truck has real trouble. It is no place for a sick person.



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At the transportation conference we want to learn how other people keep buses running and how would it be best for us to start. It seems funny to us that six school buses sit most of the time while our people walk most of the time for groceries, to church and to important meetings. We can't keep enough repairs for the old Sa Ponce Ken Bus and we have no money for a new bus.

(5.) We had a big meeting on November 29, at Wabasca. We wanted a few top government men who make policy. We got thirty officials instead who gave us mixed up stories about the price of land and said they had to follow rules which do not work for us.

Since then many officials have come to Wabasca offering many things. But often they go away mad because we are not ready to use their money or we feel it will not work at that time. Like when we started the idea of home economics courses in each neighborhood so the women could get together without a bus. We arranged for a native instructor for three months. This was to be paid by Federal and Provincial government through Community Development Branch. But three Indian Affairs people came and said we must use money for groceries before the end of the month. So we did. It got us into real trouble. There was no course.

(6.) We got into real trouble when the St. John's building which we call Kee Wee Tin Nok (Cree for Northland) Development Center was turned over to us on two hours notice. Some important people were hurt because they were not present. We almost had to let the building sit.

We do not want to talk about past troubles. We have ideas which need your help and we feel will help your work in the Desmarais-Wabasca area.

(a) Housing - As you know some housing loans have been approved by Alberta Commercial Corporation so we can start building this spring. But why we now find that the health rules and land problems get in the way. Why can't you give us the rules on where we can build and what must be done before we do so much work for nothing?

(b) Welfare housing - We find about twenty families might get loans for houses. But forty families do not have enough income to get a loan. Two thirds of these families have over five persons living in less than twenty feet by twenty feet shacks. One home has fourteen people. Many in these homes are school children who find it hard to study and be like others at school.

Neighbors and relatives of these people who happen to have a treaty number receive free homes. It makes hard feelings.



This year "Operation Beaver" may come to Wabasca. These young people representing other parts of Canada and other countries offer about five thousand hours of free labour to the area. The local churches will give thier Palm Sunday collections. We would like to use this help towards making warm homes for the needy families. We would need materials. While many families should have new homes, we feel much could be done to repair the present homes until officials get the land rules made and agree on health regulations for settlement in the area. Nearly all the homes have a poor stove, in fact poor stoves are rented. Roofing, windows, and flooring would be the main needs for another winter in these shacks. Would Welfare be able to make som contributions on the basis of hours of work on this project.

We know that you will want the exact number of such things but we only heard last week about " Operation Beaver " coming for sure and we only had written notice of this meeting on Saturday. Another problem is if we start counting windows and roofs many people will expect them. Any delay would make real hardship. These people have enough trouble already.

(c) Land -- Some land was surveyed into lots for us. It took too long for us to hear what it ~~will~~ would cost. Then we were asked to pay for a road which was to be free. Then we heard there would be no electricity. People lost interest.

Now stories are starting that you are going to make us all live in one spot, and we have to pay big prices for electricity and water. People do not want this.

Mr. Fyffe has been good to us and spent many evenings talking things over with us. But he runs into too much trouble after he is ready to give us a loan and our people give up. Th<sup>e</sup> story is now that some of the men ready to build this spring can not because they are too close to a lagoon yet a new for the Forestry is being built much closer to a lagoon. Why can't we have a map with places marked where we can build and know now what the price of land will be so we can get the loans when we are ready? Surely someone in Edmonton can write a letter for such busy people?

(d) Laundry and bathhouse -- the main use of the Kee Wee Tin Nok Development Center has been for the laundry and bath facilities. Women are always waiting for a turn. But the washing and drying machines were not made for family use. They are too large and someone has to stand around and collect the money. This costs too much. The women are willing to pay because as one mother of seventeen said, // It is nice not to have to melt snow to-night for washing tomorrow". Some people at Wabasca take their washing eighty-five miles to Slave Lake. We would like enough money to buy coin operated washers and dryers. We could put several machines in the present room. We would also need coin operated doors for our six bathtubs in the Center. We also need coin operated machines for pop and cigarets. The sale





is good but not enough yet for someone to stand around to take the money, except during the weekly show.

(e) Water system - it seems funny that we are expected to follow health rules, have regular baths and drink pure water but families with many children have to melt snow or take a water barrel with a team of horses past the pump house and cut a hole through three feet of ice to get water each day. Why can't the pump house be fixed to treat water and fill our barrels at the top of the hill?

(f) Bake Sale -- plans are made for some women to use the kitchen twice a week to make bread and cakes for a regular bake sale.

(g) Gardens - many acres of land in the best locations would make good gardens. It is owned by Indian Affairs and the Churches. We are making plans to have one of our good gardeners use such land and for him to encourage others to work with him. This will require some money for tools, gas, and seeds until the vegetables are sold. Can Alberta Commercial Corporation make loans for such business? Could Welfare make provision for hours of work done in ~~gardens~~ the gardens?

(h) Fishing - there about fifteen fishermen in the community who would like to fish the lakes on a contract basis instead of having outsiders take the fish away each year. We have a committee which would like assurance now that they could do the fishing this summer. They have already put up ice.

(i) School Board - we would like local people on the school board. We want it to represent the whole area with the same privileges for Treaty and Non-treaty.

(j) Court Worker or Placement Officer - we have a Village Level Worker whose job is to work with groups, develop leadership and such things. He is kept busy taking delegates to other places. But we find many individuals with a special kind of problem which takes much time in the community and needs help which we have no money to pay for. The work falls into four main kinds:

i. People in legal trouble do not know where to find help on short notice and have no money on hand for trips to Edmonton.

ii. People wanting more education are confused by many officials who make very brief visits.

iii. People wanting work are often unable to meet the man- power man on his rare and irregular visits.

iv. Some government forms baffle people with little formal education. Since these problems come from different government services and none of them need full time attention, we would be willing to employ a local person to look after such things and help the individual through the endless confusion to the service he needs. We would need about \$6000.00 for salary, training, travel, and telephone on a one year experimental basis. A full report would be made on the work. Could





the government offices find some way of getting together for making a grant to our Association for such work?

(k) Short Courses - We would like the Development Center to be used at least once a month for a short course to help native people of Alberta and other parts of Canada to learn more about community organizations, leadership techniques and how to run our co-operatives. To do this would give a little part time employment for cooking the meals and keeping the center clean. The only equipment needed would be a couple of sheets of black masonite for blackboards, a filing cabinet, a good record player and a gestetner machine which would also help production of the weekly newspaper "Atchimowan".

(l) Recreation - A recent survey of teenagers in the Slave Lake area gave as the three top recreation activities (a) hanging around (b) drinking (c) sex. Sports, dancing, games and other recreation activities which are an ~~aspect~~ important aspect of physical and mental development are sadly missing in the area. The rink, gymnasium and much equipment sits idle because of past paternalistic use and lack of guidance. Lost are numerous opportunities for leadership development and experience in community organization to say nothing of the confidence and character building for the young people growing into a frustrating clash between two cultures. From this viewpoint swimming, dancing lessons and such become a necessity requiring a well educated and experienced teacher on full time basis.

(m) Music Development - The local newspaper frequently draws attention to the students from the area who attend high school at Grouard making a high percentage of the School Brass Band. Yet no music lessons are available in the Wabasca area other than by an elementary school teacher who leaves each week end and will not be in the area next term. With a high percentage of the young people having little hopes for employment in the area, music no longer becomes a frill or luxury. It becomes a key for entrance into endless wholesome opportunities, especially so for the so called "School dropouts".

The area could do with a teacher of stringed instruments as well as a piano teacher and a bandmaster who can teach singing as well. The investment in instruments would be much less than the salary of a police officer or a social worker needed to the problems of the same people left to drift in such an environment.

The development center offers a place for lessons and practice. Development of transportation service would be important. It would also help if the pianos at the schools could be kept tuned. The past year an expensive piano sat idle in the school because several keys are stuck.

(n) Library - While we teach the boys and girls to read and write in English



they are sent home where little opportunity exists to practice reading or to use the language. Children from large families are expected to do home work in one room homes. Yet the Development Center sits idle with rooms for reading and quiet study. Those with experience claim that children in any society do not relish returning to school after hours for reading and study but do find it attractive to do so at another place. Some books are now available. What is needed is someone with training and understanding to supervise the project while developing local supervisors.

(o) Kindergarten - Requests have been made for opportunities to prepare children to move from Cree language families into our English language schools. To many people this sounds like a frill. To the bewildered children who lose a few years of school and to those trying to bridge the widening gap between cultures it is a different story. During the past year a qualified Kindergarten teacher was available each morning and three afternoons each week while the Development Center was idle and the children kept their mothers tied to home while being interested in learning more about skills for raising a family. The salary needed to tie this situation together will lost in frustration by the teachers who next year face these children in the regular school, with other children ready to move ahead.

(p) Administration - We would like an united administration in the Wabasca - Desmarais Area. Too many officials arrive and leave before we have a chance to talk with them. Too often there is trouble after they leave which was not necessary. There are two public radio phones, a government radio phone and a co-operative radio phone in the area. Why can't government people use them before starting the eighty-five mile trip from Slave Lake or better still before leaving their office?

Our mail service is only twice a week. We must post letters before five-thirty on saturday at Wabasca to get into the mail which goes out just before the post office opens tuesday morning. The public telephone at Wabasca is also closed from five-thirty saturday until tuesday morning. It's hard to run a community that way. Why can't we have all communication services at the Development Center? Also we wonder why government officials can't use offices at the Center?

We had one local official use an office for issuing Welfare. There was no mention of rent. Yet he moved out. The story is that the rent would be too high, and his superior at High Prairie said that he had no business using the building. Now the Treaty people have stand outside in the cold waiting their turn while the Center sits nearby, heated. The old Agency building is now to be moved from its central location to convenience the new employee with an expense account, while people without cars or bus service must travel twice as far.





The provincial welfare officials arranged to use another building at \$60.00 per month after we asked them to locate in the Center.

Time did not permit us consultation with those concerned with the Logging and sawmill progress, nor the heavy equipment short course to start soon. Mr. Strynadka is expected to be present to report on these. We have had one report on the ARDA meetings for our area.

Gentlemen, we appreciate this chance to talk about our successes and problems. We hope much good will come from it.

President-

*Jack L. Gager*

Secretary-

*Mrs. Clara Gellert*

April 3, 1968.




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